

oh, the things i thought of that i wish i had said by 6spicy6satan6

Category: IT (Movies - Muschietti)

Genre: Adult Losers Club (IT), Angst, Angst with a Happy Ending, Author Projecting Onto Richie Tozier, Coming Out, Eddie Kaspbrak Lives, F/M, Fix-It, Friends to Lovers, Gay Eddie Kaspbrak, Hurt/Comfort, I LOOKED IT UP!, M/M, Maybe OOC, Minor Ben Hanscom/Beverly Marsh, Mutual Pining, Not Actually Unrequited Love, Pining, Stanley Uris Lives, Stanley is hospitalised btw, Swearing, WHY DO AMERICANS HAVE LINES??? WHEN THEY TAKE BUSES???, and there was only one bed! oh my god there was only one bed....., everything is based off how buses work here. deal with it, exception is for dialogue, excessive use of commas, i tried!, i will fist fight stephen king in a denny's parking lot. our battle is inevitable, if you see me projecting literally mind your own goddamn business, im australian and dont know how american buses work, italics are thoughts/imput from pov character, rip to stephen king and andy muschietti but im different, the call from his wife was a pennywise trick

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Summary:

“We gotta go!” Bill yells.

He wasn't gonna leave Eddie here. Dead or alive, they were fucking getting out together.

“We have to fucking take him! Ben, you have a goddamn- goddamn twelve pack for fucks sake, please—“

Richie knew he was screaming at them. Begging. And maybe the rest knew that too— because Ben picks up Eddie.

Where the Losers take Eddie, and Eddie doesn't have to die.

1. since one day you will disappear, i will keep every part of you

“H-honey, he’s dead.”

Through cracked glasses and tears, Richie looks at Beverly. Hoping that just that look is saying the few words he’ll never say out loud. Maybe he could think it as much as he likes, he could know it, but he wouldn’t be caught dead saying it. Mostly because it feels like saying it could kill him. He looks away.

The cave’s coming down, dissolving. Boulder by boulder, rock by rock, weird clown cove spike by weird clown cove spike. Bev continues.

“We have to go, come on, come on Richie-”

“We gotta go!” Bill yells.

He wasn’t gonna leave Eddie here. Richie finally had the thing— the person— that he didn’t know he was missing for almost three decades back in his life. *Dead or alive, they were fucking getting out together.*

“We have to fucking take him! Ben, you have a goddamn- goddamn twelve pack for fucks sake, please—“

Richie knew he was screaming at them. Begging. But it’s worth the *fucking* effort. He’s worth the effort. Eddie’s always worth the fucking effort. No matter what.

And maybe the rest knew that too— because Ben picks up Eddie. *Bridal style and everything.*

Then, they’re all bolting. Trying to get out of this *fucking* clown cave, of this *fucking* clown house, of this trauma they had but couldn’t remember. Making sure not to get crushed by the debris and rubble that could crush them. Richie’s running too fast for a man in his forties. He can feel his lungs burning like they were on fire along

with a heart that's beating too fast. As if it was going to explode out of his chest at any moment. And *Eddie isn't ok*. He knows that. But he keeps on looking back, just to see Eddie still in Ben's arms and *still fucking dead* and just too still, *too still for Eddie* who should be running right behind him; with them all.

Yet before they know it, they're outside in the Derry sun watching the Neibolt house crumble. Tears are still streaming from their faces. Some tears are dried, some tears are still fresh and running down their cheeks.

You can see the bits of wood and foundation sinking into the dirt like it's quicksand from an old cartoon or kid's movie. Unsurprisingly, a monster from god knows where and it's habitat dies in a way that can't ever seem real. Like it was a fantasy. A bad dream. But none of them could wake up. At least forgetting the first time made it like a dream, but now it was more real than ever. The trauma was real. The memories were real. IT was real. Even if it was dead.

There's about a second where they're all catching their breath. Both because they need it, physically, but it's almost a sigh. A small moment of 'thank god it's all over'. That's all it was, though. A second. A moment. Because what happened catches up with them fast. It meant that Eddie's death, his wound, *his goddamn corpse* was very real too.

"...Rich?" Ben seems to inquire.

"Just... put him down. On the road, or something."

Richie can barely say the words. Even though he did, they're choked up. Hoarse. A little bit quiet. Whatever's between sorrow and exhaustion is roughly where Richie's at. Where he feels sick to his stomach and empty and tired and heart ache all at the same time.

Ben places Eddie down, on the road like Richie said, with so much care. Like if he did it wrong, like if he placed him too much to the left, he could make things worse than they already were. *God bless Ben.*

Richie kneels down next to his body, ignoring the warmth from the

road that had taken in heat from the sun. It feels like it's burning through his jeans into his knees, but that's probably an exaggeration on his part.

Then he cries. He cries like he's never cried before.

Richie's jacket is still covering the wound. He's holding Eddie's face, *having a goddamn moment*, and sobbing. In the back of his mind, he can hear Eddie ranting about how *I don't know where the hell your jacket's been, Rich* and yes, *applying pressure is a good idea but your jacket is totally dirty from that goddamn cave and shouldn't be in contact with a chest hole.*

Beverly crouches next to Richie and places her hand on his shoulder. She starts rubbing circles with her thumb. Trying to keep it up as Rich's shoulders and body shudders with sobs.

Maybe that wouldn't be how the rant would go, Richie thinks. That wasn't really the point, though.

What else could Richie do to combat the overwhelming knowledge of all the things he can only remember from now on? Knowing that from now on, everything will be a memory rather an ongoing experience. *I'm never gonna hear his stupid rants I always listen to again, never hear his laughter again, never feel him graze slightly against me when he gets too close, never see him show one of those shining smiles again, big or small.* He can only remember the way he'd walk. Only remember how he'd sound. Remember his scent from the few times he managed to get really close. *How can I keep every part of him alive if from now on he's only a memory?*

He wants to go back. Back to his childhood, the furthest place from this miserable goodbye.

Logically, Richie knew one day Eddie would disappear. Not just Eddie, but their childhood. Obviously he didn't think it would in the clown magic way, but in the normal way. The 'we just can't keep up' way. The growing up way.

Despite the trauma, childhood was about the most genuine thing he has. Being some hot-shot comedian wasn't exactly what would be

called authentic. 'Genuine' didn't even fully capture it, because it didn't acknowledge that most of it was happy. Among an alien clown and child murder, they were all still kids. Just doing stupid things like learning a dance routine to some Madonna song with Beverly, or sneaking into an R-rated movie with the other losers when they were way too young just to get horrified. Like kids do. Looking back, it was the happiest time of Richie's life. Perhaps he knew that even then, because he remembers trying to burn everything into the back of his eyes, into the pits of his skull. Trying to make it an integral part of his very being, something he would always carry with him. About every part was kept. It was mostly little memoirs, like dumb photos they took for the price of a quarter at a photo booth, but he tried.

But he forgot anyway.

Most of all, he forgot Eddie. Upon reflecting, Richie knows he only cared so much about losing his childhood because of Eddie. He could live without his childhood, or Derry. Especially Derry.

Perhaps he could even live without the rest of the Losers.

He couldn't live without Eddie.

Technically he did, but not really. Alive but not living. In a way, it explained why the past 27 years were how they were. Years of a lifeless world that he hated, made up of stupid monotony. A world that felt like a bad prequel. *Not like Star Wars prequels kind of bad, where you could still laugh at it*, but an emptiness kind of bad. That world was not just hollow, but cruel. It showed him how to fix it just to take it away, roughly 36 hours after even showing him.

God, it all sounds so juvenile. He's too old to be straight up idealising everything. Too old to be idealising Eddie. Soon enough, the tears would dry. All the grieving will be over. And he'll remember all his faults. All the imperfections. Worse than that, he'll start forgetting the little details. Details that he could only remember as long as Eddie was right next to him, like the exact pink of his shirt or the way his voice would inflect when he mentions a horrible disease to let you know it's bad without listing exactly what it does to you.

So Richie's mind starts to wander. Childhood wasn't the only place he

could go back to. *We had at least a solid day together.*

What if I didn't convince him he was brave? What if I shut my mouth for once and didn't get caught in the deadlights? What if I manned up for once and just said how I—

Somehow he starts crying even harder. If that's even possible. Ben stands at Beverly's side, but can't take his eyes off Eddie and Richie. Same went for Mike and Bill, who were in front of a scene they never wanted to see, let alone watch. Yet, they had to.

That's when Mike noticed something.

"Hey, Rich?"

Richie lifts his head slightly.

"What?"

"The blood. On your jacket, it's- it's gone."

Holy fuck, Mike's right. Suddenly, Richie's jacket was fucking clean. Like nothing happened.

"M-my hand, the scar's gone." Bill says.

Everyone's wide-eyed, looking at each other. *Tell me this is what I fucking think it is, tell me this means that Eddie's ok, tell me that through some magic bullshit this is all ok now—*

Richie slowly lifts his jacket off Eddie's chest.

There's a hole ripped through his shirt; about the size of the stab wound, but he's fine. No giant clown claw hole, no guts and blood threatening to ooze out. It's just Eddie. Right now, that's all that's needed.

While he hesitates, Richie gently goes to feel where there was a hole not too long ago. Not much more than a brush against Eddie's chest with his fingers. That alone sends electricity through Richie, but not the focus right now. Because there's moving. Slow rising and lowering. He's breathing.

Just that information is the most overwhelming wave relief, *comparable to a goddamn tsunami*.

“Holy shit, *holy fucking shit*, Eddie?—“ Richie goes to hover over Eddie’s face and starts holding his good cheek with one hand. “Eds, *please* tell me this means you’ll wake up, tell me that I’m fucking stupid or *something* , do you hear me spaghetti man? Eddi—“

What he was saying gets stretched out and goes quiet as Eddie’s eyelids opened, slowly. That makes Richie go silent and sit up. Still looking at Eddie though, of course.

Eddie’s eyes weren’t fully opened, really. More half lidded, like he was woken up from a deep sleep. In a way, he was.

He blinks, then looks at Richie. With those brown eyes that somehow hadn’t changed since they were kids. Except for some wrinkles of course, but age does that to you. Either way, that didn’t even matter to Richie. They’re still the same eyes that he could look into for eternity, the same eyes he couldn’t fully remember yet ever present in the very back in his mind where he couldn’t reach them because of clown bullshit for 27 years, the same eyes that could glow golden when the sun caught them just right as if they had trapped the sun inside them.

It’s almost stupid to Richie for him to be thinking this. He was a middle aged man but he was sounding like a lovesick teenager with a schoolgirl crush.

Suddenly the aching in his chest is back. The same ache he felt a moment ago, of sadness, but also one that was too familiar. It was the one that was always there as kids that ran into his teenage years and was there this past day or so. All this time and he’s still scared of that feeling.

But he was sad because he almost lost those eyes.

“You know I hate those nicknames, asshole.” Eddie croaks with a slight smile, looking at Richie.

Richie pulls the dumbest, teeth-iest smile.

It's also one of his happiest smiles. Even if there's tears still going down his face. To think he could've went for the rest of his life without hearing him again makes Eddie calling him an asshole music to his ears. *How I could spend my entire life listening to your rambles just for that voice even if the words don't make sense. How I could hear it for all my future lives and feel sorry for all those who've never heard you.* What else can be used to describe this moment, right now, but bittersweet? Tainted by sour moments just before but like sugar.

"No you don't, you love them."

"Really gonna argue with a man who almost died?" Eddie lifts an eyebrow and has the usual grumpy expression back. Where his forehead wrinkles and eyes squint, but also where he always has the most energy. As if he saved up that energy and look specifically for when he was gonna argue with Richie. Sometimes, that made Richie feel special.

"Yeah, well, it's you."

"What the hell is that supposed to mean, asshole?" Eddie barks. Richie just laughs. Now Eddie sits up. "Don't you dare laugh at me, I almost *died!*"

Richie's laughter dies down a little, but he's still giggly. "You told me you fucked my poor mother Maggie Tozier before you not-died, so which is more inappropriate?"

Eddie groans. "I'd rather not remember that, but thanks Rich."

Richie just pulls a tight lipped smile. "No problem, glad I could be of nuisance."

Eddie furrows his eyebrows and almost makes that grumpy expression worse, but instead it softens. He has the faintest smile as he looks at Richie.

About one second goes by before it sets in that the rest of the Losers are awkwardly standing around them, watching.

"What do we do now?" Mike says.

They all think of the same thing. *The Quarry*.

“Wash off in the Quarry?” Says Ben. Richie moves his head to look up at Ben.

“Time to go full circle, Haystack.” Richie says, smiling.

He gets up off the ground and extends a hand to Eddie. Both of them fully know Eddie doesn’t need it, but Eddie takes Richie’s hand anyway.

All the Losers stand on the cliff down to the quarry, ignoring the ‘do not jump’ sign. Well, almost all the Losers. Ignoring the space left by Stan.

“This was a bad idea.” Eddie says, crossing his arms.

“Yeah?” Enquires Richie, with an eyebrow raised and mimicked crossed arms. He fully knows where this is going.

“Yeah, *Rich*, if you haven’t noticed there’s a fucking sign that says *not* to jump in. Oh, I’m pretty goddamn sure I mentioned this last time we decided it’d be a great idea to take a bath in the Quarry; but that water is NOT in the slightest bit sanitary or even a good option to wash in. It’s—“

“Let me guess, grey water?”

“Not that, but I would not be shocked if you could get a goddamn staph infection from the Quarry at *Derry, Maine* of all places. It’s full of god knows what, including: dead insects, along with LIVING insects, underwater there’s bacteria that you can fucking SEE without —“

Richie pushes Eddie off the cliff. Right in the Quarry.

A moment later, there’s a splash.

“You didn’t just fucking push me down here, Richie! You dickhole!

When—“

And yelling. Mostly cursing at Richie.

Then Richie jumps down, almost right on top of Eddie.

“I swear to god you did that on purpose. You landed on me on purpose. You fucking suck, man. I still got a *face hole* so if it gets infected it’s all your fault, Richie, and I’ll have to get my entire face altered because it’ll fall off from the infection. I’ll never look the same because you decided it’d be a wise idea to push me in the—“

“Whatever, asshole. Just wash off or something.”

Richie wants to think he’s just exhausted after everything, but saying that wouldn’t be the whole truth. Eddie’s silent momentarily.

“I was trying to make a joke for a second, but—“ Eddie sighs. “fine. It’s still your fault if it gets infected.”

Ben jumps down, Mike right after.

The pair didn’t really realise that some of the other Losers alright jumped before them. After Richie came down Bev, then Bill.

The horror was over. But now they had to deal with the scraps, everything left from it.

Notes for the Chapter:

title is lyrics from sparkle by RADWIMPS

2. death's gonna come. when it does, screw the nerves. i'll be eating hor d'oeuvres

Summary for the Chapter:

Eddie thinks about death, and Richie comes out.

Notes for the Chapter:

a LOT more dialogue this time, but it's fun playing with dynamics. so, enjoy

“Whatever, asshole. Just wash off or something.” Richie told him.

That made Eddie go silent. He said it hoping Richie would come back at him like he usually does. Matching each other's energy wasn't exactly difficult for them.

“I was trying to make a joke for a second, but—“ Eddie sighs. “fine. It's still your fault if it gets infected.”

This wasn't exactly the first time Richie decided to stop being, well, Richie. When the Losers first defeated Pennywise and went to the clubhouse comes to mind. It wasn't that he'd even been reclusive, or quiet. Just snarky and sarcastic rather than outright obnoxious. Back then, Eddie's compromise was taking all that obnoxious energy and reflecting it right back onto Richie. Maybe Eddie was just as obnoxious though.

Remembering, he'd just confronted his Mother. For the first time in his life, he had felt free enough to finally be that insufferable kid. That insufferable kid, that despite everything, you liked anyways. Because being some reckless kid was normal. Kids being annoying is normal.

And all Eddie wanted was normal.

Perhaps that was what Richie was to him at times. In that clubhouse, in that hammock, he can remember thinking ‘*hey, at least we could be annoying together*’. ‘*Drive the rest of the world insane*’.

But we're not kids anymore. I can't just crawl into his lap like in the hammock with some shitty excuse and annoy him until he goes back to normal.

So Eddie leaves Richie alone. And despite his better judgement, he washes off in the Quarry. Trying to ignore the voice in the back of his mind that somehow sounded like both Myra and his Mom. Unable to figure out if they're yelling at the same time or if they're taking turns to lecture him. Either way, that voice only ever tells him how dirty everything is. How dirty this water is. *Will that voice ever go away? Could I tell that voice to fuck off and it would, forever?*

Instead, he focuses on the feeling of being washed off. Listening to his mind did more bad than good, Eddie sometimes found. Knowing that the water is *oh, oh so dirty* doesn't stop it from feeling refreshing and he won't let Myra or his Mom ruin that.

So he splashes his face. The water has this slight cold bite to it, even though it's summer. That's the thing with sizable bodies of water. Sure, it does follow the weather but with delay. Often, even after winter ends, the water will still be cold. Eddie can't remember where he learnt it. If he was told, or if he just read it somewhere. *Besides, fun tangents are fun.*

He looks at Richie, to see him cleaning his glasses. It takes a moment for Eddie to realise that, *oh right*, that's his blood he's cleaning off. Remembering that a moment ago, he was straight up dead sends a chill down his spine that he wishes was from the water. But it wasn't, so now he has goosebumps. Along with his hair sticking up and a sick feeling in his stomach. Usually, existential dread just leads to this horrible feeling in your stomach. Where it feels like an endless pit that hurts but somehow bearable. Painful yet indescribable. Funnily, basically every strong emotion felt like that. Like your stomach was eating you out from the inside.

Death is so much real to Eddie though, now. It was one thing to think of how one day you were gonna die and what it was gonna be like, but knowing exactly how death feels? Knowing about everything that was almost lost to it? That's a completely different thing. A bag of worms that should never be opened. Because Eddie might have lived, but he knows. He knows what death is like. He may be living, but at what cost?

So now I get the pleasure of even more unwanted emotional stress. All of a sudden the water monologue looks really nice.

Bill and Mike are just cleaning off by themselves, but will either say something to each other or to another Loser every so often. For a moment, he notices that Ben and Bev are gone. Hell knows where, but if it means they're finally making out then it doesn't matter. They both emerge from underneath the water.

"Oh god. Don't tell me you guys kissed underwater." Eddie says.

"Why, because of all the diseases we're gonna get?" Beverly laughs out, while Ben looks just a tiny bit embarrassed.

"Yes, obviously."

Beverly snorts and splashes water at Eddie. Instead of yelling, or something like that, he just kinda stoops there.

"Gonna yell at me?" She teases.

"Rather dwell in silent rage, thanks. Yelling's reserved for Richie."

Bev chuckles briefly. For a moment, Eddie can swear that he sees Richie look in their direction. Even for a second. Just out of the corner of his eye.

"Considered going into comedy, Eddie? I think you could be better than Rich."

That gets Richie's full attention. "Maybe not on his own, but replacing my writers would work out wonderfully."

"Ah yes, too bad my talents are wasted as a risk analyst."

And Richie's pretending to be asleep again.

"This isn't a funny joke, Richie. It really isn't."

He snores louder.

“It isn’t. It isn’t funny.”

Richie wakes up from his pretend sleep.

“Oh, what? Sorry, guess I’ll just never understand the joys of working with the letters of math.”

A half smirk appears on Eddie’s face. “Numbers.” He rolls his eyes. “They’re called numbers.”

Out of all the things Eddie would’ve lost to death, this would be the thing he would miss most. Talking to Richie. *Hearing his stupid jokes that no one but him and me find funny.*

Then Richie stops really talking to Eddie. Or anyone. After, all the Losers went to the Derry Townhouse and took a real shower, much to Eddie’s relief. But it’s been a few days since then. Two or three.

Of course, he doesn’t completely stop talking. The day Richie “Trashmouth” Tozier goes quiet is when someone finally cuts out his tongue for talking too much. It’s just a lot less than usual, and Eddie notices. That’s all.

Eddie cares more about *where the fuck are we all gonna go from here?* Surprisingly, everyone’s still here. In Derry. Walking around town, going to the only two or so diners, or just going over memories with each other. None of it’s bad, per se. Plus, Myra hasn’t tried contacting him. Which is surprising, but relieving and in itself a plus. It is keeping Eddie on his toes a little, though. Like she’s gonna pop around the corner at any second. *It isn’t exactly healthy to dread seeing your wife. If I go back, I probably should get divorced.*

Still, they’re all here. But he thinks he knows why no one’s leaving. They’re all too afraid that they will, they’ll leave and they’ll forget. To be fair, he is too. It’s almost funny, how Derry’s found its way to keep them all in its clutches even when everything’s over. Every nook, cranny and corner seems to be home of a memory that’s either good, bad or both. Even the bad ones aren’t repelling them to the lives they’ve all made outside of it. Going back to his life seemed like

the worst choice right now. What did Eddie have back in New York? Myra, a controlling wife that's more like his Mom than he'd like to admit? A job, that despite what he tells himself, is as boring as Richie says? An apartment that feels like it belongs to someone else? *How can I go back to a life that I no longer recognise as mine?*

"Hey, Eddie, you alright? Staring into space there." Mike says as he walks in. Honestly, it was what Eddie should've expected when he had just been sitting on a couch in the Townhouse's lounge that doubled as a bar. Without even being on his phone.

"Yeah, fine. Just thinking."

"Fair enough." Mike takes a seat in the chair next to the couch. There's a pause. For at least a while. "I've been looking at plane tickets."

"Really? To where?"

Mike does that weird exhale-laugh thing. "I don't really know. Been looking at several places. Mostly Florida, though."

"I'd hope so, kinda been your dream since a kid."

Mike smiles. "Yeah, it really has been."

Another pause.

"I'm glad. That you're looking to move. I can't believe you stayed in Derry all this time. I get wanting to make sure Pennywise was gone for good, but holy shit."

"Well, I did what I had to."

Oh come on. That's bullshit. "You didn't have to, though."

"Maybe so. But I think it was worth it."

Pause. Mostly because Eddie couldn't believe that Mike willingly threw away his life to Derry. To save it. Sure, stopping more child

murder is a noble cause but all of the others left, knowing that. *Perhaps saying Stan was the weakest of the group was wrong; we were all cowards.*

“Honestly, after that, I feel like we should be calling you the leader instead of Bill.”

Mike laughs at that. “Nah, he was always the one taking charge.” It might be true, but are you really gonna discredit yourself like that, Mike? “Besides, he enjoys it too much.”

That’s when Eddie laughs too. It dies down, and it’s quiet for a minute. Mike speaks up.

“So, what do you think you’re gonna do?”

Eddie sighs. “I... I don’t really know.”

“Don’t you have a wife waiting in New York?”

“Yeah, but to be completely honest, it’s not as if I love her or anything. At least Bill likes who he shacked up with. Even if we ignore the wife thing, I don’t have much there anyway. Not much that I like, at least.” Eddie made sure not to mention the whole, considering divorce thing.

Mike hums. “You should probably figure things out soon, no one’s gonna stay much longer than a week. I might for a little longer than that, but that’s it.”

“God, I know. At least you have something that you want to do and look forward to. It’s like, I either go back to a life I hate or stay in Derry and die.”

“That’s a bit binary, don’t you think?”

Eddie crosses his arms and leans back. “Maybe.”

Mike leans forward. “You have options, Eddie. You really do.”

Eddie looks at Mike. “Like what?”

Mike looks at him back, right in the eye.

“Make a new life for yourself.”

On day four, Ben and Bev leave. Together, of course. That part wasn't surprising. They all made their goodbyes at the airport, with an amount of hugging most would consider too much. That, and then Bill said he should be leaving tomorrow to finish his movie. Before they left, they all made a group chat. For all the Losers. The main plan was to keep updated, and to make sure they all remember once they leave.

So now, it was only Eddie, Richie, Bill and Mike.

Eddie still had no idea what he was going to do. Taking up Mike's idea to start a new life sounded promising, but he didn't know when he was going to get started. It was tempting to ask Mike about it all, but he could restart however he wanted. There was no guidelines. Besides, he was an adult. *I know how things work.*

Instead, he did practically nothing all day. Apart from realising that divorcing Myra would be the best place to start. After that though, he didn't have anything. Sure, there was quitting his job but he wouldn't have anywhere else to go or do after that.

Then it was the fifth day, and Bill left. A much less dramatic goodbye, with him saying his goodbye and just walking out the townhouse.

Bill leaving set off this unease in Eddie. As much as he didn't want to admit it.

Instinctually, Eddie knew Richie would be the next person to go. Maybe not tomorrow, but perhaps the day after. *Only because Richie's a dick, who didn't want to say anything to anyone right now.* He got upset just knowing Richie would leave, having barely said anything since they killed Pennywise. Not to him, not to the other losers. *Not even saying when he would leave.* That started to bother him, about midway through the afternoon and into the evening. It got worse when he realised that he had no idea where Richie actually was, or

doing. He hadn't for the entire day.

Next thing Eddie knows, it's just become night, and he's going to Richie's room's door. He didn't know if he was actually in there, but it was worth a shot. Eddie knocks the door, hard.

No answer.

He's practically storming off as he walks out the doors of the Townhouse, just to see Richie standing outside and smoking a cigarette. There's no porch around the townhouse, but there's stairs. Richie's standing just on the side of the road, almost on the curb, underneath a light post. Bathing in light that clearly hasn't had it's bulb changed in awhile, but still pretty bright somehow. Across is where the remaining Losers cars were parked. Except for Mike, who went to the library at night. *Thank god that the summers weren't humid.* At night, things cooled down. Eddie walked over, closer to Richie.

"Rich." He stopped when he reached Richie's right, slightly behind him.

Richie turns to look at him. "Yeah?"

"Why have you been so quiet?"

"Me? Quiet? That's a first." *He can't be trying to avoid the topic right now.*

"Shut up. You know what I'm talking about."

There's a pause. Richie's looking at Eddie, as if he's trying to psyche him out. *That, or he's trying to figure out his next words.*

"Does it matter that much?"

"Kind of. I mean, you're an adult. You can do what you want, no one's stopping you. Especially not me. But it does matter when you haven't even bothered saying when you're gonna leave."

"Is that what this is about?"

"Stop asking questions. I want an answer to my question. Why

haven't you been talking to me? Or the Losers?"

"Your original question was why I've been quiet." *Doesn't he have the decency to not seem like he's avoiding the topic?*

"Still not an answer, Richie."

Rich flicks away his cigarette onto the road and exhales. "Just didn't feel like it, alright?"

"You're *Trashmouth* fucking *Tozier* , how do you just not feel like talking?"

"I don't know. Sometimes I just don't. It's a people thing. Everyone experiences that. Social battery ran out."

"Yeah, right. Totally." *He had a solid four to five days to 'recharge'.*

"Believe me on that, Eds."

"I'd like to, but I'm surprisingly good at bullshit detecting. Maybe that should be my job."

"Maybe so."

They stand there for a moment. *Guess I'm not just dealing with snarky Rich. I'm dealing with straight up avoidant Richie.*

"You know, Rich, if something's wrong, you can say it. Something doesn't even have to be wrong. There are people in your life to talk to." Eddie walked further up.

"I know that. I think my well earned nickname shows that I know that."

"It really doesn't."

"Oh, really?"

"Yeah. Sure, you say a lot of shit. More often than not though, you don't say what you mean. Or what you feel. It's more like layers of subtext and humour."

“Thank you, Dr. K, I didn’t know you were also a therapist.”

“Yeah, just like that.”

Richie, like an idiot, opens and closes his mouth for awhile. Eddie just feels proud he caught him, even if it wasn’t hard and Richie walked right in. Then Richie’s gone quiet for a second.

“Are you really trying to get me to open up?”

“Maybe I *am*. It couldn’t hurt you.”

“Fine, if it pleases your royal spaghetti.”

Pause. A kind of long pause, actually. One where Eddie could tell Richie was getting ready to say what he wanted to say. He could even see Richie getting worked up about what he was gonna say. Or what he was feeling. But the pause is still too long.

“I can’t read your thoughts, Richie.”

Richie groans. Loud. “I *know* that, Eddie! This entire goddamn time, I was fucking avoiding this. I fucking knew that if I had an actual conversation, serious or not, with *any* of you guys, I’d have to address the goddamn elephant in the room! Even if I’m the only one who sees it, or even fucking knows about it! So, there’s the answer to your question.”

Eddie opens his mouth to speak. “Oh, and just so you don’t *ask* about the elephant, I’m *gay*. *That’s it. That’s the elephant.*”

Eddie closes his mouth. He can feel the words ringing through his ears, echoing. *Oh. Oh.*

Jesus christ, what am I supposed to say to that? I feel like if he told me he secretly hates all the Losers or something, it would be way easier to respond to.

So Eddie stands there, with his arms crossed. Richie’s looking at him, expecting him to say something.

“... Do you want me to say something?”

Richie thinks about it.

“Yes, and no.”

Eddie sighs and sits on the edge of the curb with his legs tucked towards himself. His feet are on the road. Apart of him expects Richie to sit right next to him, but he stays standing.

“None of us would judge you for that, Rich.”

“I know.”

Richie goes to sit beside Eddie now.

Eddie doesn't have to actually ask why he didn't just tell them, because Richie gets it.

“I guess it just becomes real when you say it out loud. It's real easy to *know* that you're not, y'know, into vagina. Or dick, if we wanna reverse genders here. It's just really easy to know you're different than the other boys when they're all going crazy about some girl and you have no idea what the fuss is about. And then you go the same kind of crazy, but for another boy. So you *know* but it's only you who knows though. It's your secret. And when it's a secret, at least you can pretend it isn't real.”

Richie takes a deep breath. “Telling you guys would've made it all so real. Even though you'd never see me as anything less, even though you'd all still love me, I'd still become different. Not saying anything meant I could stay the same.”

Eddie hums in understanding. Because he fully understands that. He can also tell that Richie must've thought about it a lot. *There's no way he came up with it on the spot, no matter how smart he actually was.*

“Honestly, I'm just some gross old man who is somehow not over being gay. So, in summary, coming out is bullshit.”

That gets a laugh, because *of course that's how Richie would end that.*

“You're only forty, Rich. Besides, I don't really see you as different. The only thing that's really changed is that all the dirty sex jokes have a totally different context now.”

“Oh come on, dude-”

Eddie starts laughing. “Seriously! Who knew that *Richie ‘I fucked your mom’ Tozier* was overcompensating.”

“Ok, you can shut up now.”

Those words themselves had a harsh edge, but delivered it with fondness and a smile. Eddie’s laughter dies down to a small giggle, down to nothing. “I... I completely get what you mean, though. Like, the whole ‘other boys going crazy over girls’ thing.”

Richie looks at Eddie. *Ah, he knows where I’m going with this.* Eddie hesitates saying what he’s going to, hearing that inner voice again. This time, it’s just his mother. Telling him that *only dirty, ill boys like other boys.*

“I don’t think I’m that into girls either. Don’t think I’ve ever been.” He blurts out. Richie blinks at him for a moment.

“You’re married, Kaspbrak.”

“Yep.” Eddie pops the P at the end.

It has to set in for Richie. Eddie waits.

“Why’d you marry her, then?”

That was a question Eddie often came back to himself. Fortunately and unfortunately, that means answering is easy.

“Felt right at the time. Just been dating for awhile, and I was young. Maybe a little stupid, even. Didn’t expect it to go this goddamn long, though. Roughly 10 years? Maybe less? God. Never even took off the ring.”

He starts to fiddle a little with his ring, while Richie looks off into the distance. *I don’t know why I never took off this stupid ring. All it served as, for all these years, was a reminder that I don’t feel free enough to be me.* In that sense, Myra reminded him of his mother in more ways than behaviour.

“You really never took it off?” Rich says faintly.

“No.” Eddie says just as softly back.

Richie looks back at Eddie, to see him just kind of rubbing it. He takes Eddie’s hand, and takes it off himself. Slowly. He lets the ring rest in his palm for a second.

“You have now.”

Then he chucks it off into the distance. A weight is lifted, both of Eddie’s finger and his shoulders. Technically, he wasn’t fully free. *But I’m getting pretty darn close.*

“Now, hopefully, you can get over this weird Oedipus-like complex you’ve developed.”

Eddie lets out a soft laugh. “That’d be great.”

“Wasn’t expecting the both of us to say so much, damn.” Rich says shortly after, as he chuckles at himself.

“To be fair, life would be pretty boring if unexpected bullshit didn’t pop up every so often.”

“What, like killer alien clowns?”

Eddie laughs. “Like killer alien clowns, totally.”

They both sit in silence. It’s a comfortable silence, though. Not one where they didn’t have anything to say, but one where they just soaked in the moment. *It’s hard not to be comfortable with Richie.* However, Eddie still had something bugging him.

“When are you gonna leave?” Eddie says, ever so faintly. He has to at least know that.

“Soon, I imagine. I’ve been getting back into contact with my agent and talking to him, despite his initial yelling.” *Of course, Richie just cancelled a tour midway through.*

“Good to know you’ve had someone to yell at you while I wasn’t there.”

Richie smiles.

“What’s your plan, Eds?”

“Hm? I don’t... I don’t really know.”

“Really?”

“Yeah. Mike did recommend just starting over.”

“Not a bad idea.”

“It isn’t. Except, so far, the plan starts and ends with getting a divorce.”

Richie chokes on air. “Yeah?”

“Yeah.”

“Got nothing after that?”

“Yep.”

More Richie looking at Eddie, with his brain gears obviously going to work. *It’s really obvious when he takes time to think. Can anyone else tell, or is it just me?*

“What if you came and lived with me? In LA?”

Notes for the Chapter:

no one gets to complain about richie having a bit of an outburst while coming out, men are fragile and i shall write them as such

(do not murder me for that joke.)

oh, that and that conversation is where i REALLY project, see if you can tell where.

WAIT literally DO NOT NOTICE HOW I WROTE LIKE 3000~ WORDS IN 2 DAYS

also title is from you gotta die sometime from
falsettos

3. have i known you for 20 seconds, or 20 years?

Summary for the Chapter:

Stanley's alive, and Richie and Eddie visit him.

Notes for the Chapter:

im sorry this took so long compared to the second chapter!

1. all of a sudden that writing juice just left (i hope it's not richie povs that do that to me) 2. im getting caught up in assessment and 3. i planned out some more stuff, so it should be easier for the next chapter or so.

enjoy! i finally got to stanley even though i planned to lead into it at the end of the last chapter!

TW use of the f slur (i don't know if lesbians get a pass? but i used it)

Shit. I should've thought it out a bit more. Eddie's just looking at me, and while that's always nice, it also makes me feel like I could burn up at any second. Possibly die. Especially now.

"You don't have to, just throwing out i-"

"No. I like that idea."

Richie swallows. "Really?"

"Yeah. Let's do it. I got nothing at New York, and my other option is staying in Derry to eventually rot."

Eddie's willing to stay with me. He might even want to. That's a simple thing, in reality. Wanting to be around somebody, or being ok living with them. But it also means so much that's stupid. More often than not, Richie noticed that Eddie just had that kind of effect. Being able to make smalls things special, just because it's him.

He's totally gonna judge my apartment and living habits. They're not even that bad. He's just fussy. But it'll be worth it. Even though nothing would happen between us, not in a billion years. Because Eddie, with just friendship, was more than enough.

"Cool. Cool beans."

"I'm sorry, what?" Eddie says it with a laugh through it. "Using 'beans' in any context hasn't been cool since about 2013. Sooner, probably."

"Informative as always, Kaspbrak. Has anyone told you that you're good at stating the obvious?"

"At this point, you should make a list at all the things I'm supposedly good at, Richie."

I think I would, except Eddie would read it. And after at least one full page (more, probably) of gushing about all the things he's good at, maybe even more than that, he'd read the last thing listed; and it would be making me love him. Again and again, harder and harder. Always on purpose.

"It'd be a pretty short list."

"Dick."

"Jokes on you, I'm into that."

"Oh my god," Eddie laughs again. "Fuck you, man."

"Yeah, fuck you too."

Richie gets up off the ground, off the curb. There's a small crack, and a bit of a groan from him. *When did the ground become so goddamn low.* Eddie gets up too, and brushes himself off. *'Course he'd brush the dirt off his ass.* Richie couldn't find himself bothered enough to do the same.

They walk back into the townhouse. Inn. Motel. More words for the same thing. Gravitating towards the bar, Richie pulls up a stool. Out of habit, Eddie sits right next to him.

“Excuse me, boys?”

In the doorway to the staircase leading to every room, was the owner of the Derry townhouse. An old woman, presumably running this place for decades. Both Richie and Eddie turned around to look at her, even though they were obviously not boys anymore.

“A woman called, asking for ‘either Bill, Eddie or preferably Richie ’? I told her that one of them had left but two were still here.”

Wait, what?

“ Well, I’d be Richie.”

The old owner gestured to Richie, to follow her. He got up and did, with Eddie right beside him looking as confused as they both felt. To put it simply, they weren’t expecting a call and the last one they had wasn’t the best experience they’ve had.

At the head desk, she picks up the phone and presumably calls back the number and hands it to Richie.

“Hello?”

“Is this Richie Tozier speaking?”

“Uh, Yeah. That’d be me.”

Eddie and Richie look at each other. Eddie mouths to Richie ‘what’s going on’ just for Richie to shrug back.

“I’m Patty Uris.”

A much more distressed and upset version of her voice echoes in the background of Richie’s mind, with very different words. Richie mouths ‘it’s Stan’s wife’ back to Eddie. There’s a mix of confusion and dread on Eddie’s face.

“My husband woke up recently- he asked to talk to you. Or for me to. He also mentioned others to ask for.”

Where Richie finds relief, he finds more confusion. “Wait, Stanley’s alive?”

“ Barely. We... we got lucky. I’m in the hospital, right now.”

That’s a lot of fucking things to take in. Stanley was alive. All this time, the losers thought he died. That he had lost his life to himself. Suicide. Then again, it was Pennywise who told them. “ But- but we thought he died?”

“ No one else should know what happened but me.”

In the silence, Richie finds anger. They all fell for a Pennywise trick. I can’t believe we all trusted the word of a fucking space clown. THE fucking space clown. “Is he awake?”

“No, right now he’s resting.”

“When can we visit?”

“Whenever you can. We’re in Georgia, Atlanta at—”

Richie goes to get a piece of paper to write the hospitals address on.

“ Ok. We’ll get the soonest flight possible there.”

Richie hangs up the phone. Eddie’s looking at him like he’s expecting Richie to explain, but there’s no way he doesn’t know what’s going on.

“ Pack your bags, Eduardo. We’re going to Atlanta.”

After Eddie struggling to narrow down all of his luggage, a flight delay, and a baby that wouldn’t stop crying on the plane, they’re in Atlanta. It’s about one in the afternoon, reaching two. I’m totally gonna have to apologise to Jason for all of this. Promising to come back just to ask him to magically whip out two plane tickets to Atlanta as soon as possible.

Richie stood out of the airport when he realised.

“Ah, fuck!”

“Jesus christ, what?!”

“I forgot to tell the others that Stanley’s alive.” That makes Richie feel really stupid.

Eddie rolls his eyes. “Well, I already knew that, because of course you would. You’re lucky that I already did it for you, because I had the time too, and knew you’d forget. Dumbass.”

Oh.

“Also, you haven’t gotten any sleep for at least a day. I can’t believe you didn’t even sleep on the plane.”

While thinking of a reply, Richie takes in how Eddie just covered for him. It was small, but still feels like a lot. *Is that what living with him would be like? Knowing my ass will always be covered? Would he be my safety net? Something— someone to fall into? Would he mind?*

But Eddie also noticed how he didn’t sleep. And was probably worrying about it. In 27 years, no one really paid much attention to Richie. Apart from the famous comedian thing, of course. *But that wasn’t out of any care* . Fame had brought attention— but it was all hollow. No one really knew him. It’s a perpetual performance. Maintaining an image, or cultivating more vapid viewers.

“It’s hard to settle on one, Eds.”

“You go on tours—”

“We use buses!”

“ *Just* buses?”

“Well, no, not just buses we do use planes—”

“Do you see my point?”

“Let’s—” Richie sighs. “let’s just get to the hospital. See Stanley. Stan Urine. Staniel. Stan the Man.”

“I get it, you like giving people nicknames.”

Richie and Eddie catch a cab to the hospital, bag(s) in hand. For a

moment, they sit in silence.

“Uh, Rich?”

“Yeah?”

“Isn’t it weird that we’re gonna show up with our luggage?”

“It is, but since when did any of us care about seeming weird?”

“Touché, Trashmouth.”

Next thing they knew, they were at the hospital’s front desk. The car ride was mostly silent, with Eddie taking in his surroundings while Richie looked at his phone.

“We’re here to see Stanley Uris.” Eddie says.

The lady at the desk is young, with black hair tucked neatly into a low ponytail. “Oh, we’ve been told that we should expect two visitors for him. Give me a moment to confirm your visit with his family. You two can wait to the side.”

By family, I’m assuming his wife, even though I’d hope that Stan’s family would be bothering to visit often. He deserves that.

About a moment later, they’re told where Stanley’s room is, with instructions and they can head up.

When reaching the room, they can see who’s presumably Stan’s wife waiting right outside the door. She’s blonde, and notices them too.

“So, you’re Eddie and Richie?”

“Yep.” is said by Richie and Eddie simultaneously.

“He’s been talking about you two. When he’s awake.”

“I’d sure hope so, we bought very last minute plane tickets for good old Staniel.”

Patty smiles at that. “It’s good knowing Stanley has good friends.

Even if he's never brought up any of you up before."

"Uh— yeah, if we were to explain why he never did you'd think we're crazy. So."

"How bad can it be?"

"Bad." Eddie says. Patty laughs.

"Try me."

Richie takes the reins. "Alright, the story goes like this: at 13, we killed a killer space clown and then left Derry. Conveniently forgot about the whole 'killer space clown' thing and each other for oh, about 27 years? Then Mike— who stayed and completely remembered— calls us all to kill the clown again because it came back. We remember all of sudden, so we killed that motherfucker. And now we're here. Does that sound good to you?"

"I'm going to conveniently forget about that, because no way that happened."

"Mhm." Eddie confirms.

"Stanley's awake, by the way. I imagine both of you want to talk to him. I'll grab something from the vending machine and be back in a moment."

"Alright, see you."

Patty starts walking away.

"I can't believe you told her the truth, Rich."

"She asked us to."

Eddie rolls his eyes and smiles. "Yeah, yeah, whatever you say, asshole." he said as both of them walked into Stanley's room.

They walk in to see Stanley, at the bed, with bandages on his forearms and reading his book. Or is he doing a puzzle in the book? *Holy shit, he hasn't changed since he was a kid. Just looks like kid him but— older? Aged? It's just... Stanley. Except he has glasses now.*

Stanley notices them enter and suddenly seems more awake.

“Stan Urine!”

Stanley deflates a little at that. But he’s still happy.

“Yeah, good to see you too, Richie.”

Richie goes in for a hug and Stanley hugs him back. It ends with a pat on the back. Several. Several pats on the back.

“I’m here too, guys.” Eddie says, but fondly and smiling.

Stanley chuckles. “It’s great to see you too, Eddie.”

“Jesus Christ man, didn’t think to call? We thought you were dead.” Richie says, going to sit in one of the beside chairs. It’s said lightheartedly, but he meant it. Just a little.

Stanley’s silent for a moment. “I’m sorry, I just... it all came back. The memories. Like, before I realised what I was doing, I just finished writing seven letters and getting into a goddamn tub.”

Suddenly, dread sets in on Stanley’s face. “It’s.... It’s dead, right?”

“Yes, of course. For good. If it wasn’t, we wouldn’t be here.” Eddie says.

Richie hums in agreement. “Either because we died, or still down in that cave fighting It.”

Stanley nods. “Well I’m glad. And again, I’m sorry. I should’ve been there. I was a coward.”

“No, come on man. None of us blame you for anything. Hell, if I got my memories back from that phone call? Probably would’ve chosen death instead as well.”

Eddie looks at Richie, with hurt. “Don’t say that, Rich.”

Eddie... cares.

Richie sighs. “Yeah, ok.”

“Any how, what the hell’s been happening with you, Stan? We leave you for 27 years and you managed to find a goddamn wife. Maybe we should’ve left sooner if we knew that was gonna happen!” Richie says. Stanley chuckles at it.

From there, they all catch up. Somewhere, Patty comes back in and joins in the conversation. It was like the Jade, but smaller. And with less food. And with less ‘being drunk’. Learning about Stan’s life past Derry made Richie so glad. Glad that Stan had found happiness past Derry. That he lived a normal life. *God, way better than just normal.* Even with the lows, like not being able to conceive a child with Patty. The rest of the Losers weren’t really able to find that happiness with the almost 30 years given. Not without some kind of big downside. *I guess that’s apart of the killer clown thing.* Apart of it made Richie jealous, but this was his friend. His best friend. After Eddie, of course. But Richie’s brain never thought of Eddie as just a friend, despite Richie’s resistance. So yeah, Stan. His best friend.

By the time the conversation was over, it was almost ten at night and Eddie was asleep in the other *rather shitty* bedside chair. He went to sleep a while ago, and they were starting to run out of stories. Patty, while loving her husband, had to go home to get proper sleep. Mostly because Stan insisted, because Stan was good. Really good. Stan looked at Eddie then back to Richie.

“So...”

Pause. “What?”

“Have you told him? I presume so.”

“Told- wait, told him what?”

“That you love him.”

Oh shit fuck fucking hell—

Richie chokes on nothing. “What?”

“Are you really shocked that I know, Trashmouth?”

“What the hell, don’t just say that shit man. And, yeah, I am.

Considering I've never actually *told* anyone, Stan."

Pause. Stan looks off, away from Richie, contemplatively. "You didn't have to. I knew since we were kids."

Has he really known since then? "I'm sorry, what."

"It was the bickering."

"What do you mean, the bickering?"

"You know what I mean. Very juvenile, really. Like a little boy tugging on a girl's pigtails on the playground because he's too scared to actually talk to her, or say that he likes her. You're just lucky he pulls back."

Richie puffs and just looks at the ceiling in irritation. *I really am lucky he pulls back.* Richie ignores the implication that it would mean Eddie also likes him, using the same immature tactics.

"Well, no. I haven't told him. I did come out, but that's it."

Stan looks back at Richie. He thinks for a moment. "Baby steps?"

"Yeah." Pause. "Baby steps."

Richie was unprepared to tell Stanley that he doesn't think he'll ever tell Eddie, *baby steps or not*. It's not something Richie ever wants to pull on Eddie. No matter how much he hurts, or yearns. There was the selfish reason, of *no way he likes me back*. There's also how Richie thinks Eddie could do better. That he deserves better. *No matter how much I understand him, or want to, there's someone out there better for him.*

"Uh... on the topic. I did carve our initials in the Kissing Bridge. When we were kids. I even revisited it. Re-carved the names."

And I hate how clearly I remembered it. How easily I found it. Among all those names, there we were. R + E. R + E. R + E. Among the many, obvious and presumably heterosexual couple's initials. Who were real couples. Plus various homophobic carvings. Amongst all of them, there was a carving done by 13 year old Richie Tozier. Who was just really gay, really in

love with his best friend and who didn't know how to express it. Who was afraid to express it. Afraid to, in Derry, where no one was afraid to outcast him and call him a *fucking fag*.

Stan starts to laugh slightly.

"It's not funny."

"You carved your names in the goddamn Kissing Bridge, Rich."

"And?"

"And it's very sweet of you."

"Shut up, I'd rather not reflect on the choices made by me when I was 13."

Surprisingly, Stan did go silent. Mostly out of amusement.

"Wait, what did you mean by 'presume so'? When asking if I told him?"

"It means that you two act like an old married couple and I thought that, being an adult, you told him. Guess not."

"You're being real judgy about it."

"I've been watching you two prance around feelings since I was a child. I have the right to be just a tiny bit bitter."

Richie rolls his eyes. "Can we stop talking about this?"

"Yeah, sure. I need to rest anyways. But you better at least mention me in your wedding vows, it's what I deserve."

Just the thought of marrying Eddie gets Richie a bit flushed. "Ok, Stan the Man, go to sleep now."

"Yeah, yeah."

So Stanley goes to go to sleep. Or attempt to, at the least.

And Richie looks over at Eddie. He's sitting in the bad hospital chair,

sleep. Looking quite dumb, really. With his arms folded, head back, and *is that drool? Since when does Eddie 'Hypochondriac' Kaspbrak drool?*

He looked dumb. But Richie didn't care. All he had was fondness. A warm feeling in the pit of his stomach and core of his heart. His heart was also sore. A very familiar sore, but a sore nonetheless. Eddie was being Eddie. And that always created absolute longing. *Even when he was being annoying, or whatever the fuck.* Like when he would make fun of Richie, or just made jokes that were stupider yet funnier than his. Truth was, that was when Richie most got to know Eddie. When he was being fun, being himself. Plus, it was great to tell people that Eddie had done something outrageous, or outrageously stupid, because they all knew him as some kind of angel. That was what his mother wanted people to think. That was what his mother thought he was. At least, that's what she wanted him to be.

Ultimately, out of all the Losers, Eddie probably had one of the better reputations because of it. But Richie found comfort knowing that Eddie could be *the biggest piece of shit* when everyone else thought of him as the nice boy with too many concerns.

But coming back to Derry meant Richie could remember everything. *Like that one time, when we were just at the diner by ourselves. In the background, there's a jukebox playing and people talking, but he's all I'm listening to. All I have my own eyes on.* Talking about how he can't have greasy food. How he hates how he can't eat it, no matter how much he wants to because of his mom. *And I'm listening, but he finishes the rant and looks at me. Maybe for an answer, a reply. In that window, that moment, I looked into his eyes and he looked back. Those goddamn brown eyes. I could see all the details, all the hidden glows. Intricacies. And for the first time, I felt connected to somebody. I felt like he could see my soul, all the things I never said, everything. Everything about me. I felt seen. That was terrifying. Yet, it also felt ok. Because if anyone was gonna see me, it was gonna be Eddie. I wanted him to see me. And I prayed that I could see him as well. To see him just as clearly, for him to feel just as exposed as I somehow felt, that was what I wanted. It was a rare feeling. And it was the first time I even felt it. There was also this hope, this thought, this need, that he felt that the moment was special too. In my throat, the words were stuck. This feeling was stuck there as*

well. I didn't know if I wanted to scream 'I love you' or if I wanted to kiss him. Both, probably. But both of those instincts were grounded in my stomach, my throat. Somehow, both wanted to do something. Lean forward and kiss. Yell and suffer the consequences. But I did neither. As if he would do it himself. Giving him that opportunity. Internally begging for him to please, please, please do something. Don't, and I could die.

And then the moment was gone. So I spoke up and said something stupid. Because he liked that, and he was special to me, and I wanted with pure desperation to be a least a little bit special to him.

We spent hours in the diner that day. Three or more, maybe. There was no one to stop us. Eddie even bought junk food. And said fuck and broke rules just because he could. A few days later, I remember writing down the date it happened. August 30th. Just before summer ended. That summer where I should've told him. That summer where he should've known. That summer, 1989.

That was years ago. With a version of Eddie I remember so clearly, but has changed and grown. Now, there's frown lines and wrinkles that are just as beautiful as the face I remember that had none of them. Aged, but not too different. Unique characteristics that he, and only he could have. Like freckles that you only see up close, or after he's been in the sun for long enough.

Right now, I can see his eyelids flicker. Real Eddie, adult Eddie, starts to wake up.

Notes for the Chapter:

i wrote this chapter listening to christmas songs and victorious songs. and with the text font on comic sans.

this is me from a few hours after writing here to say
nvm my new obsession is shark puppy

title is lyrics from taylor swift's song lover

4. so i breathe you in. all your love and all my lies.

Notes for the Chapter:

this was gonna have more angst but i am too soft. i am softy. i want YEARNING TENDERNESS and BANTER

also sorry this is shorter than i expected because dialogue but hey have fun

Bright, white, LED lights against a beige background come into focus.

I've always fucking hated hospitals.

Once, there was a time where he didn't. Where he was young, so young, and with no friends. Where all he had was his mother. That was it. No one else's life to reference, no other lives for him to look at and realise how different it looks. How different it feels. He didn't hate it because he had nothing else to compare it to. Funnily, the things he now hates were where he used to find comfort.

Everything was clean. Sterylised. No imperfections, no real colour, just plain white. Nothing could hurt him. *No, not in a hospital. All those diseases that mommy told you about? They can't hurt you here. You're safe with me, here, Eddie-bear.*

Eddie blocked out that voice that was more like a memory.

It only lasted for a short time, though. Liking hospitals. Because then he met Bill, and Stan. Most of all, he found Richie. Soon, all Eddie could find for hospitals was disdain. So he hated hospitals. How they smelt, like how they always faintly had the scent of bandages somehow. As if he could smell other people's *fucking wounds*. This faint metallic edge to it. How no amount of cleaner could clear it up. How every level was essentially identical. How there was nothing to see but white walls, floors, and ceilings. How he only had bad, or tainted memories of hallowed halls.

And no one was fucking happy at hospitals. Either, they're sick or

injured and potentially dying. Or they're here to see someone they love in that condition.

Basically, fuck hospitals.

Eddie moved his head down, to look forward. Just for pain to spike in the back of his neck. It wasn't sharp, but it was still *fucking pain*. Eddie groans and rubs it, even though he knows it'll do nothing. *What was I expecting, going to sleep in a chair?*

Eddie looked at Richie, to see him slumped and looking right back at him. Richie straightens up at Eddie looking at him.

"Hey, Rich? Think we could find a spare bed in this place?"

Richie softly smiles and looks off, leaning in the chair. "Don't think so, Edster. If you're desperate, I'm sure we can find a sleazy motel nearby."

"God, anything as long as it means my back doesn't throw out."

"Mhm. I hear ya, Eds." He said as he got up and stretched. Richie took out his phone. Eddie just stretched in his chair, and got up as well.

So, now they're walking down to some crummy motel that's conveniently a few blocks away. Bags in hand. Richie has one hand in his pocket, *because he obviously doesn't know what to do with his hands. Ever.*

"How much do you want to bet the place will be crawling with cockroaches?"

"If I answer, do you promise not to complain about it when we're there, Eds?"

"Sure, but no promises."

Richie smiles. "Well, then I think it's pretty likely. I do feel like you'll

exaggerate it, though.”

“Hell’s that supposed to mean, ass hat?”

“It means you’ll see one cockroach and want to evacuate immediately.”

“Now you’re the one exaggerating.”

“Oh, ye of little faith.”

“I have plenty of faith. Plenty of faith that this place will be gross.”

“We’re not even there yet! And come on, you know you have high standards.”

“Excuse you, Richie. I just have common decency.”

“You know, you’ve become more of a bitch since you’ve come out to me.”

“Says you! I bet you grew a vagina. Became an actual, literal, bitch.”

“Oh god, I hope not. Wanna check, make sure that I haven’t, Sir Spaghetti?”

“Ew! Richie!”

“I hope your mom doesn’t mind. Think Mrs K was bi? Secret lesbian?”

Eddie laughs loudly, genuinely, and doesn’t feel bad about it. “Hm, I don’t know. She did bring up an old friend called Eleanor sometimes. Spent a lot of time with the other moms. Y’know, telling them to keep their kids away from me. You might be in luck, Rich.”

“Really? You think so, Eddie? That means so much to me. I don’t think I could live without Sonia in my life.”

“Oh yeah?”

“Yes, absolutely. That woman was the love of my life. I’ll forever be marked by her love.”

“Even though you’re gay?”

“Ah, she was such a strong feminine force. Not even my extremely homosexual-self could resist her, or her heavy breasts.” Richie fondles the air, at a ridiculous distance from his actual chest to pretend they’re Eddie’s mom’s boobs.

“That’s not funny. You’re not being funny right now.” Eddie said that, but he was laughing. “I’m so sorry to tell you this though, Rich. Because my mother died years ago.”

Richie fake gasps. Very dramatically.

“No!”

“Yes.” Eddie tries to fight a smile, and fails.

“How can I live now, knowing my one true love has died? Oh, she was taken too soon! What a cruel world!”

Eddie’s giggling.

“O happy dagger, this is thy sheath; there rust, and let me die!”

“You’re Juliet in this situation?”

“What can I say? Being stabbed is the dramatic end I deserve.”

“If you don’t end up dying from a stab wound, I’m gonna be really disappointed now.”

“I wouldn’t want to disappoint my dear Eddie spaghetti, d’you want to stab me now?”

“As much as I’d love to commit felony right now, I’m not armed.”

“Not even a pocket knife?”

“Nope.”

“Darn. Who knew that Eddie ‘sorry guys, my mom said no’ Kaspbrak didn’t carry a knife with him?”

“Oh come on, even if I *did* I wouldn’t stab you. That should be obvious.”

“Yeah, yeah, I knew that Kaspbrak. You love me too much.”

“Uh--” *Fuck, I can feel myself blush.* “ Yeah. Keep telling yourself that, Rich.”

Richie just grins.

“Only rooms we got only have one bed, that alright with you fellas?”

Great. This would probably be better if this place’s owner wasn’t just some mildly overweight man in a vest and a neck beard.

Eddie looks at the owner in disbelief. Even in the dusty, green tinted room, there’s clear disappointment. Barely even disappointment--more like some misguided cry for help. It’s not as if the problem was that he didn’t like Richie. That he was dreading it because he couldn’t handle it for the bad, or negative reasons. The kind you get when you’re paired up with the weirdo in class, and get to try to cooperate with someone you don’t want to. That wasn’t it. Quite the opposite. Eddie knew he liked Richie. *I like him a hell of a lot, way more than I should.* That was the problem. That was what he was scared of. Scared of his own feelings. “ Are there any spare mattresses in the room?” Eddie says.

“Nope.”

There’s a sigh from Richie. “All right, Eds. We’ll work with what we got.” He puts cash on the counter, and is given the key.

“You’re in room 112. Up the stairs, far left.”

“Thank you.” Eddie managed to get out. *So now we’re walking to a room that I know will practically force us together. Come on.*

To put things more eloquently, it was the feelings after he feels okay. With every true joy, every small pleasure, in its place will be a distorted version of it.

“Room 112.” Richie says and inserts the key, opening the door.

It was kind of what Eddie was expecting-- slightly run down patterned wallpaper *that's green for some reason*, just a hint of grime *everywhere* and a bed with brown sheets. In the back, he can see a small room that must be a bathroom.

His brain warps feelings, to the point where it's unrecognisable. As if it was some black, disembodied being that eats up his thoughts and emotions just to churn it up as vomit in his face. Funnily enough, it wasn't too unlike the leper.

“So uh, what are we gonna do? About the bed thing?” Eddie says.

“There's a bathroom. I could sleep in the tub?”

“You're not sleeping in a fucking bathtub, Richie.”

“I could make the floor work, or something.”

“Or, I could just take the floor.”

“No way, we came here just so *you* don't throw out your back.”

“Yeah, doesn't mean I want you to do so instead.”

“I don't mind, Eddie.”

“I don't care if you don't mind, you're not sleeping on the fucking floor *or* the bathtub. That's final, alright?”

“Alright.”

“Good.”

Richie pauses, and walks forward slowly to sit on the bed. “Just gonna share the bed, then?”

Eddie goes to sit right next to him. Side to side. Shoulder to shoulder. He finds himself just looking at a spot on the wall. Thinking.

To make things worse, that was what *almost every comfort or good emotion is like*. Sure, he could make it about how he feels about liking

his friend *that way*. Or about boys. *But that's not me. Not all of it. Fuck, does anyone know what that feels like?*

"We don't really have any other choice."

"Yeah. Probably should think of some rules or something."

"Lets just sleep back to back. Y'know?"

"Yeah."

Richie gets up to strip to his boxers, too lazy to pull out pajamas that he didn't pack. Eddie looks back at that one spot.

Does anyone know what it feels like to be filling up with so much goddamn shit that I feel like I could burst but can't say, can't express, just because I'm busy worrying about the consequences? Because I'm too busy feeling bad about being me right afterwards?

"Are you gonna sleep in your day clothes or something?"

"Are you really gonna sleep in boxers?"

"More appropriate than sleeping in a polo shirt and jeans."

"Screw you. At least I packed pajamas with me."

"Wait, like legit pajamas? Button-up top and matching pants and everything?"

"Shut up."

"Or, even better, is it an Ebenezer Scrooge smock? Tell me you walk around with an old Victorian candle in the little holder thingy at night. All shakily, like an old man and with the cute little cap-hat thing."

Richie does the motions and everything, just to burst out wheezing with laughter. *It'd be easier to get irritated if he wasn't almost naked. And if his laugh wasn't as nice as it was.* Even though he was getting made fun of, Eddie still had to fight a smile. Luckily, he succeeded.

"It's not funny." Richie keeps on laughing. "You're not funny. Fuck you."

Eddie moves back to grab a pillow, which he throws at Richie. "Go to sleep or something, ass wipe."

"If you insist, Mr. Scrooge."

"Don't make me grab another pillow."

"Alright, alright. I hear you, Eds. Jeez."

Richie makes a face that can only say 'yikes' to some imaginary audience, jokingly. Eddie just rolls his eyes and gets up to grab his pajamas from his bag. Richie throws himself onto the bed face first, making about the noise you'd expect from a 6'1 man putting all his weight on a cheap bed. Eddie would check to make sure the bed wasn't broken, but he can't be bothered. Instead, he just gets his pajamas along with a toothbrush and paste. *Wait, has he even brushed his teeth? I swear to god, if he hasn't. That's disgusting.*

"Richie, have you brushed your teeth?"

Rather than a cohesive answer, he just grunts. It comes out muffled because he's just laying on his stomach with face in the bed. Eddie just takes it as a no.

"I suggest doing it, you only get one set of teeth, Richie."

Richie lifts his head. "Come on, I'll be fine this one time. I've been brushing for my entire life, they're not gonna fall out or anything."

"If you insist."

So Eddie changes. And thinks. More like remembers. Nothing specific, just memories. *Memories of not going out by myself for once or taking any action because I felt like I couldn't. Barely even feeling like I could go out and buy some goddamn groceries because that bite of freedom is met with Myra or my mother screaming at my fucking face.*

Eddie sees Richie, this time he's actually sleeping. Properly, and all that. Back facing towards the left side, where Eddie's obviously gonna

sleep.

And so he does.

When Eddie wakes up, it's roughly five or six am. Based solely on the lighting.

But he was facing Richie, and Richie was facing him.

It's not as if it's unlikely. *Hell, we should've expected this. You can't just keep yourself back to back when you're not conscious.*

It still makes him nervous, anyways. Embarrassed, even.

We're so close, too. If I wanted to, I could just reach out. Run a hand in his hair, that's obviously thinning out at this point. Maybe not even run it. Just feel it. To know how it feels. Would it be soft? Could that sensory memory haunt him for days?

Eddie could pull his hand up to Richie's face, his cheek. Perhaps his jaw, feel how it's been defined and roughened throughout the years. Eddie can see stubble, within the slight golden glow of the morning, but how would it feel? Itchy, probably. Irritating. Rough. But Eddie still wants to feel it. The kid Eddie had grown up with had pretty soft skin compared. While he never touched his face, he can remember grabbing his arm. Or brushing it by accident when they got close. That happened a lot. Sometimes, it felt more purposeful than accidental. That kid was also a lot more rounder.

His face has become a lot more square. A lot more than I remember it being, or expecting it to become. Almost to a ridiculous extent. Like, when did that annoying kid become a man? Had he become a man? Obviously. He'd changed. Even then, sometimes it didn't feel like it. It didn't really feel like he grew up. Then again, Eddie once thought it was impossible for him to do so. *But he did. He just did it without me there.* Apart of that hurt. As if Eddie left him, on purpose. Recently, he almost did. But he came back. Why? No one really knows. Maybe something about a turtle. Maybe something about clown magic.

Maybe something about Derry. Does it really matter though? He got to be with Richie again. He got to be with all the Losers again. Maybe that's all that matters.

That he gets to fix things. That he gets to improve his life, and become happy. That he gets another chance to try to get rid of his own brain's twisted distortions, which surrounded him for the better part of nearly forty years. That he gets to stay with the boy, who turned into man. That man, who when he saw at some probably very offensive Chinese restaurant, was so familiar. Yet, also unknowable. Truth was, he'd only seen one part of him. So now he's got to learn about everything he had missed. Learn about every twist and turn, spared no detail, his future as well. Hopefully, that future had him in it from now on. And hopefully, his nights could be filled with the tale of a man he should've never missed.

It hurt. His heart heart. *I can't even tell if it's in a good way.* Was his chest supposed to feel tight right now? Especially when he looked over at his lips? They had become smaller. Either that, or Eddie's memory was betraying him and he'd over exaggerated them in his mind. He couldn't even focus on that. Everything was so out of focus. One moment, he's looking at his shut eyes and thinking about how delicate his lashes look against everything else. How nicely they frame his face. Next, it's how different he looks with glasses. Next, it's his eyes when they're open.

If I was more poetic or some bullshit, I would probably think about how I am Icarus and Richie is the sun, about to melt off my wings. That kind of crap that every single yearning, pining think piece has. Hell, Wikipedia has a page on all of its uses in, well, everything. But that's always a load of dog shit, isn't it? All I am, is a man. Wanting another man. But my wings will never burn off, as I will never go towards the sun. I am not Icarus, I am Daedalus— one who doesn't die to my own hubris.

Truth was that all Eddie would have to do to straight up kiss him is just move a tiny bit closer. Move closer, and face the consequences. Let himself give in to want, need. It would be so easy. So easy. So easy. So easy.

Notes for the Chapter:

title is from the song gazebos done by shark puppy/
the wonderful people who make real songs for that
au??? like i love you guys????

also i have a playlist for this fic! just kinda songs i'll
listen to while writing it, or influence it. i have no
idea what to do to get people to see it so here's the
link:

[https://open.spotify.com/
playlist/3gyl3UnNZFZ0KVzQRFc53r?si=LgxSL-
osQMe9radCBPe8JA](https://open.spotify.com/playlist/3gyl3UnNZFZ0KVzQRFc53r?si=LgxSL-osQMe9radCBPe8JA)

it literally has every song you'd expect to find in a
reddie playlist but shhhhhhhh

5. now, my riverbed has dried. shall i find a lover?

Notes for the Chapter:

tw mild/slight panic attack??? kinda?? i don't know, as i don't have anxiety. but it happened. i prefer to think it's general panic but may as well warn. also tw use of the q word!

the drinking game for this chapter/fic is to take a shot every time i use a basic sentence that starts with eddie or richie because i need to describe a very basic action done by either of them

Richie blinked himself awake. *Are things blurry because I just woke up or because I don't have my goddamn glasses on? I feel like a fucking molerat. I probably look like one too, beady eyed and everything. Just with hair, or something.*

He turns to his left, to see where Eddie should be sleeping. Despite it being against their set rule. *Not as if he'll notice if he's still asleep.*

But Eddie isn't there.

To be fair, there not being a dip in the mattress should've warned him a little, but it catches him off guard.

"Eddie?"

He says it quietly. Like a whisper.

Surprise is soon evaporated by panic.

Was everything a fucking dream? Did I come to Georgia by my fucking self, pretending he was still here? Don't tell me he's still dead. He can't be. Fuck that, fuck me, fuck.

Richie shoots up.

"Eds?"

It's said much louder. Not a yell, but not exactly your 'inside voice'.

There's no answer.

Now there's a lump in his throat and he can feel his eyes sting a little.

Oh fuck you, I'm not gonna cry. He isn't dead. He isn't fucking dead. I saw him come alive. Everyone else saw him alive. No way that just comes undone. Come on. Clown magic, turtle magic, whatever the fuck it is, can't just go like that. Right? Is Pennywise really that much of a cruel fucking asshole?

His breathing thickens. Somehow, it's still done in short breaths. It feels more like he's trying to keep himself grounded.

Has logic and reason finally come in? Science, all it says is how everyone's good as gone once dead. I should've known. This entire week, I pretended. All because I wished he was still there. Some hidden part, illogically insisting he's around.

Richie can feel some of the tears finally edge out a little. But he's still putting up a good fight against them. It's not much more than a thick glaze.

If Richie did cry, it wouldn't be for himself. Self pity is all that would be; and over what? That he couldn't tell the nice boy he's known forever that he liked him? *Pathetic. That's all it'd be.* Cry, mourn, grieve. But not for what he wanted out of him. *Cry for Eddie. Cry for all Eddie didn't get to achieve, or improve. Cry for how Eddie didn't get to live the life he deserved.*

He hears the bathroom door open. Next is Eddie walking out, towel around waist.

"Is something up—"

Eddie sees him, and pauses. Just for a moment.

"...Richie?"

It sets in for Richie that he must look like *absolute shit*, having just woken up and started *almost* crying.

“Uh— no. I’m fine, it’s ok.”

Richie can’t really see Eddie’s face, but he knows that he’s looking at him. *Just really sadly. Probably like some wounded puppy dog. Like what I keep to myself hurts him more than it hurts me.*

“You look like you’re about to cry.”

“Really? It’s probably just a morning thing. A ‘having just woken up’ thing. Like, y’know how sometimes your eyes get watery? Yeah, that.”

Eddie just looked at him like he doesn’t believe him. All that did was make Richie worry that he knew why he was on the verge of tears.

“Honestly, it’s nothing. Everything’s good. I didn’t even know my eyes were watering or anything, man.”

Richie can tell that Eddie rolled his eyes.

“I’d rather have you admit you have feelings than fucking lie to me, Rich.”

Jesus Christ, is he really gonna pull that fucking card?

“What does it matter to you if I was crying, or about to, or whatever the fuck?”

He looks at Richie. *Annoyed, probably.* You can almost feel him deflate, or give up. Especially considering he just sighs. *Exhales.* Eddie slowly goes to sit on the edge of the bed. For once, he sits all hunched over.

“It matters a lot more than you know, dickward.”

He said it like it was a secret, like it was something you didn’t want other people to know. *Maybe it was.*

“Listen, for the past week or so... every time I went to sleep, I was scared I wouldn’t wake up. But every morning, I wake up.”

Eddie turns for a moment to look at Richie.

“And I’m here to stay, Richie.”

Richie didn’t say anything after that. *What are you supposed to say? Alright then? Thank you for your input?*

All he could respond with was an affirmative hum. Enough to say that he gets what he was saying; that he knew that Eddie was *comforting* him.

Eddie turned back, away from Richie.

In a way, it was scary. It was scary how Eddie knew what was wrong. How he just *got it* . No questions, no reaffirming. Years have gone by with no one really getting it. Richie was loud, brash. That’s how he got attention, how he got people to look at him.

But no one saw him.

Being a ‘Trashmouth’ only gets you so far.

To look, and to see, they are different. Looking is a glance. Looking is acknowledgement, the surface level. *Looking is like thinking that the loud kid, who has fun and is open to the world, is stupid.* But to see, and to see without haze, is to know. Seeing is knowing and knowing is seeing.

And Eddie can see me.

He sees me in such a way that I feel like I no longer have to use my own eyes.

That ordeal of being known, as horrifying as it could be, felt *worth it*. *Being known can be terrifying, but without being known, can you be loved? And can you be loved on purpose? The thing about no one truly knowing you— is that it’s lonely.* When no one knows you, and you don’t know anyone, then you have *no one*. All you have, the connections made, it’s gone before you can even call it yours. Annual friendships that are gone by the time the next year comes around. Yet, by then, you’ve already moved on and diving right into the next batch. There’s family, mostly extended, who you can’t be bothered to see and who can’t even be bothered *to send a goddamn Christmas card.*

Basically, people don't give a rat's ass most of the time.

All that really led to, *all that nonexistent neglect that's probably being exaggerated*, was want. Severe want. *Severe want for somebody to be there, even when people aren't the answer.* People aren't the answer, and maybe that want wasn't even his own. Was it all just programmed into him? *Into all of us? Finding fulfilment in one thing is just unnecessary pressure onto that thing.* Pressure that feels like the depths of the ocean. *It's worse when it's a person. Not a thing, but a being. Living, breathing, thinking.* How could they take it in just fine? How could you find answers in somebody else, when they're actually just more questions in disguise? *Like a bunch of kids piled on top of each other in a trench coat trying to sneak into an R rated movie.*

How to get people to see you, is unknown. Some choose not to see, to stay blind, because it's easy. Easy, but only because no one else seems real to you. Blind, only to their own humanity and empathy. The moment everyone else becomes human beings as well; that is when you can no longer act with only selfish actions.

Other times, to get seen is just difficult. Whether you're desperate for connection or not. Richie found, after all these years of loneliness and internally begging for someone to just *know*, no one does. When they do, it's scary. Intimidating. But for it to happen, it *has* to be intimidating.

It's risky as shit.

There's always a chance, though. Who knows; if you open your heart, it might not get clawed by a bear; but nurtured by fellow man. To take that chance, that's worth it. Risk it all for a chance, for a slither of love. For without it, love is nothing more than an abstract concept. Something you can never reach, always just out of touch. Love is what everyone has but you never will.

Eddie makes 'being known' not so scary.

Richie reaches back to get his glasses, and puts them on. He just continues to sit in his spot, thinking.

The annoying part about putting on his glasses was that he could see

Eddie now, really clearly. That's usually fine, but it becomes more of an issue when he's just had a shower. Like, he can see how the mix of steam and water somehow both flattened and fluffed out his hair. *Well, it might not have been 'fluffed'. But it was out and it was messy and he hadn't had the opportunity to clean it up and it looked nice. Cute.*

The moisture also added this shiny, clean edge to his skin. With this slight flush to it, saying that he had a hot shower. While it might not have been early enough to be 'golden hour', the morning sun still gave Eddie a golden glow. There was also the scar on his back. Richie thought that he wouldn't have one, with magic healing bullshit and all that. But there it was. A red-ish patch, right where It speared him. It's starting to go white. Apart of Richie wanted to reach out and touch it. Feel that he's ok. Feel that there's no hole there. Feel Eddie's solid back against his own fingers, his palm.

Richie wants to say something.

The thing about silence, or at least basic background noise, is that it's all encompassing. Silence was the worst kind of whitenoise, an absolutely awful sound. Deafening. And it's everywhere. Just in the everyday, where you live and breath. Silence is reality. What no one really tells you about 'reality' is how insufferable it is. Real life means no breaks, no pauses. Living, in its purest form, is like watching an embarrassing situation in a tv show. But you can't look away. *You can't pause the show. You can't walk into the other room. Silence always felt like that.* Silence meant you couldn't run away from your own thoughts. Silence meant you had to listen to things you didn't want to. Richie 'Trashmouth' Tozier spent his entire life avoiding silence. The deafening kind.

Sometimes, it wasn't just silence. Sometimes, it was just things he didn't want to hear. Like when his parents would occasionally argue, even if he knew that it happens and they'd be fine the next day. Like when Bowers, and most of the goddamn school, had nothing better to do but talk about how he's a dirty queer.

So he said something, and it was something just *slightly stupid*.

"Sitting like that is bad for your back, Eddie."

Eddie kinda rubs his face, like he's fed up. "Mhm, and I give up on caring about that shit, Richie."

That brought a bit of relief. Knowing that Eddie is starting to *just... not care about that bullshit anymore. It's bullshit that his mom got him to care about. Even if the back thing was fair, she was a fucking bitch. I don't feel bad about thinking that. I'm never gonna take that back, either.*

"What about scoliosis? Gonna become Quasimodo?"

Eddie turns back to look at Richie. "Scoliosis is where your back like — becomes swervy. Like an 'S'." *He even drew a little 'S' in the air. Cute.* "Not a hunchback, dumbfuck."

Richie knows he has a dumb grin on his face. "Very descriptive."

"Oh shut up."

"Doctors are, as the kids would say, quaking."

Eddie lifts an eyebrow at him. "Really? Really, Richie?"

"Mhm."

"Have you ever even *thought* about shutting the fuck up?"

"Once or twice, never worked out."

Eddie huffs in defeat and turns back around.

It's quiet again. Maybe a more comfortable silence, this time.

"What now?" Eddie says, faintly.

It takes a small moment for Richie to process.

"Hm?"

"Like... where do we go from here?"

Richie didn't really know. Sure, they had the unsaid barebones plan. Go to New York, have Eddie get that divorce, have Eddie move in... But everything felt so uncertain. Right now, they're just two guys

sitting on a motel room bed. Maybe that's all that's needed.

"... I don't know. Not really. I mean, you'll probably get your divorce and stuff but... there's so much. So much. Besides..."

It hits that maybe the haze of the morning is blurring what he's thinking and saying.

Richie laughs, but it was weak. Just tired, ingenuine. "Shit happens."

The talk with Stanley was kind of long. Of course, there was the stuff they forgot to mention yesterday, but there was also telling him they were gonna leave. Along with why. *Actually, the biggest problem right now was how the fuck are we gonna get from Atlanta to New York? Personally, I'd rather not call up Jason for yet another last minute plane trip. Especially considering it could very well end with him going fucking buckwild, or just straight up dropping me as a client.* More than anything, Eddie and Richie were glad that Stan understood. *Even if the others would be able to get there in a few days, it would've really spoiled shit if Stanley didn't at least understand.* Oh, and before they left, he got to be added to their group chat. Stanley probably won't be able to go on his phone for awhile, but it was worth it.

Eddie and Richie walk out of the hospital, bags hand in hand. Eddie waits for them to walk out a bit more to say something.

"So, now what, Tozier?"

Richie takes a moment to weigh the options.

"Think waiting at the airport for long enough will teleport us to New York or something?"

Eddie rolls his eyes. "Can't you just call up your manager or agent or whatever it's called again?"

"No way, he's already on the verge of murdering me. In fact, I bet that he's been planning my death for a few days now. Hopefully it isn't too late to write a note saying he did it."

Eddie pauses to think.

“What about a road trip?”

“With what car?”

Eddie stops walking, while Rich continues to walk. He stops only a bit ahead and looks back to Eddie. Eddie’s looking back in disbelief.

“You’re telling me that we’re stuck in Atlanta, Georgia, with no way out.”

This time, Richie rolls his eyes at Eddie.

“There is, very clearly, a way out. However, yes. We are functionally stuck here.”

“How did we not think of this.”

Richie hums to himself. “I think we were so caught up in the euphoria that Stanley was alive, that for a moment, we lived in a world where the limitations of travel didn’t exist.”

“Isn’t that a fucking meme?” Eddie says with no hesitation.

“Perhaps.”

“You’re 40 years old.”

“So?”

“So, if we weren’t so stuck on the whole getting to New York thing, I would be verbally assaulting you right now.”

“Yeah, yeah.” Richie turns back to continue walking. “Think walking there is a good idea?”

Eddie starts walking again and does a little sprint to catch up.

“Fucking hell, Rich. If you’re not gonna throw out good ideas don’t throw out any at all.”

“I’m joking. I think we can get there with a bus trip or two. A train?”

“...That might actually work. Look it up, Richie.”

“You have a phone.”

“So do you.”

Richie groans and stops to take out his phone. Eddie waits for him to look it up.

“Alright. We should be able to take two buses and get there fine. Roughly. It'll take about 18 hours, maybe 19, but it's do-able. There's no guarantees though and shit might change or get delayed.”

“Whatever, not as if we have any other choice.”

“Well, my dear Eddie Spaghetti, the Atlanta bus station should be...”

Richie looks at his phone while Eddie rolls his eyes.

He points in the direction the bus station should be, exaggeratedly.
“That way!”

Richie and Eddie had been sitting down at the bus station for all of five minutes before Eddie spoke.

“I'm starting to wish that you mentioned we'd be waiting for the bus for at least an hour.” He says, deflating back into the metal bench.

“What, is there something wrong with my company Eduardo?”

“Yes. And no.” Eddie looks at Richie. “I don't know, we could've at least talked to Stan for longer.”

Richie thinks for a second, and turns to look at Eddie.

“Is there much more left to say?”

Eddie looks off onto the platform.

“Not from you. And the other Losers do.”

“The other Losers aren’t here, dude. Besides, what the hell do you even want to talk about with Stanley?”

Eddie pauses, and leans forward.

“...It’s personal.”

Richie wants to know what’s personal. *Why is is personal, what did you want to know?* But also, Richie respected that. He respected Eddie. *Don’t fucking push it, Tozier. Don’t push him. That’s what you do, you push until everyone doesn’t dare pull back into you.*

“ And?”

Maybe if he gets mad, I can use the excuse he did basically the same thing.

Eddie speaks delicately.

“ And. I think it’s something only he’d understand.”

Fuck is that supposed to mean?

Richie responds with the same delicacy in tone.

“What is it?”

Eddie goes quiet. He thinks. Obviously turning on his serious mask. *I feel like for the tone he’s going for right now is more suited for somewhere with much, much more dramatic lighting. Like, if it was night time with some sick coloured LED lights highlighting his silhouette, that’d be way cooler. Instead he gets tunnel darkness and normal white light.*

Eddie says it faintly, but it feels loud.

“I wanted to ask him if he remembers what it’s like to be dead.”

Shit.

“Can... Can you?”

Eddie seems to take a moment to evaluate a response.

“Yeah.” He says, almost whispering through a sigh.

I don't think anyone else has been able to do this before. Get me so silent.

Richie wanted to reach out. *But how? I could say something. But no matter what I say, it's never what I mean. Not fully. How am I supposed to say something to that in the first place? Especially when it's clear he doesn't really want an answer, a reply.*

Eddie just wants comfort.

Maybe Stan could give him that. Maybe he couldn't. Maybe I don't fully understand. How could I? It wasn't me who nearly died. I don't know how it feels, or how he feels. That's kind of the thing with Eddie, more often than not. Sometimes, he's the man I know. The man I could love. That, I think, I do love.

Others, he feels like a total stranger.

It's strange when he does. When all of a sudden he seems faintly alien, and just not what I think I know. But also, he has no responsibility to be what I think he is. Besides, isn't that what makes other beings and love so beautiful? That it's some sort of mystery, perhaps not made to be solved or fixed, but to be discovered?

Richie finds himself leaning forward, so they're at the same level. So that Richie can look at him. He ends up leaning slightly away, but they're close. Right next to each other. Richie can feel Eddie's leg up against his. The contact feels like a burn, both through his soul and body. Richie looks right at Eddie, his face, and he looks back. Eddie holds his gaze, and so does Richie. Richie studies his face, mentally. Even though it lasts for not more than a singular moment, even though he's done it many times before, even though no one else will ever know. And for a split second, Richie feels like a kid again. Like he's young again. Like he could go out and climb on monkey bars, or play hide and seek. In that second, it's like there are still dreams to be dreamt. As if they hadn't died long ago. *I'm pretty sure that I could kiss him, too.*

Richie wanted to reach out. So he does.

And he pulls Eddie into a hug. He pulls Eddie in from his neck, and puts his arms around him. Richie feels Eddie, mostly just how he's within his own arms. There's something intimate about holding an entire person. To have their mass just within your arms, to feel their own body heat.

Eddie's gone stiff, though. Like he needs to process what's going on, or can't understand why he's being hugged. But then he gets used to it. He *relaxes*. Eddie pulls his arms up under Richie's arms, and holds him back. He's gripping onto Richie, his back, like he needs it. Richie can feel Eddie slowly go to rest his head on his shoulder. Almost buried there, close to his neck; in the crook of his neck would've been a better description. Richie doesn't think he's crying, or that he would, but he's not sure. More than anything, there was concern. Concern in the area that this is causing great hurt to Eddie— *but he didn't say shit. Not until today.* Maybe Eddie didn't have to tell him everything, that'd be asking too much; and some things are just too personal. But this is something neither of them could hide from.

No matter how much either of them wanted to.

Notes for the Chapter:

me, writing this fic: -donkey from shrek voice- WELL THEN YOU GOTTA GOTTA TRY A LITTLE TENDERNE-ESS!

additionally: -hard to be the bard from something rotten blasting in the background-

why do i spend my time writing this fic when i have entire original stories plotted out. i got like ten thousand words on this and only three thousand on the original shit aklscjklldasjc

also dont worry this fic isnt gonna be massive, the trip will be shortened and put in one chapter. this decision was not mine but my instagram follower's who had no idea what the poll was about. AND THE OTHER LOSERS WILL GET INVOLVED I SWEAR I JUST GONNA THINK ABOUT ITTTT

WAIT THE TITLE IS LYRICS FROM MYSTERY OF
LOVE BUT I GUESS I MISHEARD THEM BECAUSE
THE LYRIC'S 'NO OTHER' INSTEAD OF 'LOVER' BUT
LUCKILY I DON'T GIVE A SHIT